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Wabi Sabi : East meets West

by

Gerard J. Kelly

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Sculpture

Fine Arts Department


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Fall 2012

Edmonton, Alberta

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Artist Statement: Gerard J. Kelly, 2012

My work over the past thirty years has been, like my personality, in an evolving state. I am not the man I was at twenty-two and neither is my sculpture similar to those early works in concept or form. Yet, there are themes and philosophies that have remained with me and are evident in my sculptures from those early years to now. Reviewing my oeuvre it is evident to me that my work has been permeated by some synonymous underlying thoughts. It has taken time to mature as an artist and to realize in my work and my life the effects of these philosophies and themes on both.

My interest in reading about philosophy, history, science, and art have affected my production and my life. As we all are made of base constituent elements and experiences that have coalesced to form the individuals we are today, so it is with my work. I chose the title Wabi Sabi: East meets West because Wabi Sabi is one of those philosophies that has been persistent in my oeuvre.

Wabi Sabi is a Japanese esthetic philosophy with a long history steeped in the tea ceremony but it is even older than that. It evolved out of a period of ostentatious and elaborate production of crafts and art that might be analogous to the western baroque period.

Wabi is a higher dimension of transcendent beauty arrived at by sublimating the outer ostentation and complexity of an object, or thought, to allow the inner, unpretentious beauty to surface. Wabi is no fan of excessive expression, but enjoys taciturnity, detests haughtiness and respects humility. Wabi is equated with a form of stark, austere beauty.

Sabi is the admiration or sense of pleasure one gets when viewing an irregular, asymmetrical form as opposed to a perfect form. Sabi speaks of the patina of the aged, the worn, and the surface that hints at an inner beauty. It is the pleasure we attain from seeing an old rusted automobile in a field of high grass as opposed to a long line of new cars in a parking lot.

Wabi Sabi the esthetic pleasure I achieve from the realization of a work that is marred by flaws, and whose surface is imperfect, and yet it instills in me a joy of accomplishment. I would rather stir my tea with a patinated, stained spoon than a highly polished silver spoon.

In my stone works, most notably the Goddess series of sculpture that I produced from 1999 to 2001, I utilized the natural formations of the marble I found in the wild as indicators that informed my manipulation of the material into the finished sculptures. I had at the beginning of my Masters study here attempted to force the material I was using into forms. This contradicted my past mode of working and I had difficulty understanding my displeasure with the end results, even though these works were at times accepted by my mentor and other students. My breakthrough came when I realized that it was possible with the found steel I was using to work in a similar mode. It was possible to assist this material into forms that not only reinforced my concepts for a series of works revolving around a theme but into sculpture that allowed an esoteric expression of thought, and yet work within the framework of formal art.

They are pieces that I feel stand on their own as formal works of art. They are art objects with an esthetic appeal derived from form and use of material. I think they owe a debt to the works of Brancusi, Caro, Lipchitz, and Smith. Like most artist of the 20th Century I was greatly enfluenced by all these giants of art history and I am endebedt to them for the strides they made. Today steel is concidered by many to be a traditional, almost obsolete art material, and yet it is newer than the use of found objects. I owe a debt to Smith, and Caro for bringing this material out of the factories,taking the mundane and making it extraordinary. I owe a debt to Peter Hide who has the tenacity to stand against the tide of trendy artists who ride the coat tails of curators, and who while reenventing the wheel believe they are being innovative. I am grateful for all he has taught me.

GERARD J. KELLY

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EDUCATION:

2010 - Present **Master of Fine Arts**

University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta

1994 – 1995 **WOOD WORKING TECHNOLOGY DIPLOMA**

College of the North Atlantic Burin, Newfoundland

1982 – 1986 **BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS DEGREE**

Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Halifax, Nova Scotia

1980 -1982 **APPLIED ARTS IN FINE ARTS DIPLOMA**

West Viking College Stephenville, Newfoundland

GALLERY REPRESENTATION:

State of the Arts, Commercial Street, Corner Brook, NL

Red Ochre Gallery, Duckworth St., St. John's, NL

SELECTED SOLO SHOWS:

2008 **Self Realized**, Arts and Culture Center, Gander, NL

2007 **Self Realized**, Arts and Culture Center, Corner Brook, NL

Arts and Culture Center, Stephenville, NL

2006 **Worry, Contentment**, World Trade Center, Halifax, NS

2005 **Selected Works**, Arts and Culture Center, Corner Brook, NL

2003 **Washed Up FURDER**, Arts and Culture Center, Corner Brook, NL

2002 **Washed Up**, Arts and Culture Center, Corner Brook, NL

2001 **Conversations with the Goddess**, ARTsPLACE Gallery, Annapolis Royal, NS

2000 **Artifactual Artifices**, Arts and Culture Center, Corner Brook, NL

1999 **In the Temple of the Goddess**, Arts and Culture Center, Corner Brook, NL

1985 **Three Pieces of Art**, Resource Center for the Arts Gallery, LSPU Hall, St. John's, NL

SELECTED GROUP SHOWS:

2012 **Going with the wind**, Group Show, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, NB

2011 **Artists for Peace**, Group Show, Balkans Travelling Art Action

2010 **Kingsbrae Sculpture Garden**, Group Show, St Andrews , NB

2010 **Artists for Peace**, Group Show, Bosnia-Herzegovina

2009 **Zone-Zero-Gallikos**, Group Show, Kilkis, Greece

2009 **Artists for Peace**, Group Show, Istanbul, Turkey

2009 **Kingsbrae Sculpture Garden**, Group Show, St Andrews , NB

2005 **ASCS**, Group Show, Inverness Arts Center, NS

2001 **Containment, Vessels and Goddess**,
Arts and Culture Center, Corner Brook, NL

2001 **Staff, Faculty Exhibit**,
Sir Wilfred Grenfell College Gallery, Corner Brook, NL

2000 **Wood, The Beauty of Objects**,
➤ Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's, NL
➤ Phoenix Park Visitor Center, Dublin, Ireland
➤ Limerick City Art Gallery, Limerick, Ireland
➤ Waterford Art Gallery, Waterford, Ireland

1991 **No Fishing**,
Resource Center for the Arts Gallery, LSPU Hall, St. John's, NL

1989 **Notions of the River**,
Gallery Connection, Fredericton, NB

1987 **Uncharted Terrain**,
Windrush Gallery, Saint John, NB

1986 **Myth-Guided Youth**, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, NS

AWARDS:

2008 Travel Grant, Newfoundland Arts Council

1999 Project Grant, Newfoundland Arts Council

1986 Study Award, Burin Peninsula Arts Council

1985 Project Grant, Newfoundland Arts Council

COLLECTIONS :

Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's, NL
North Star Cement, Corner Brook, NL
ARTsPLACE Gallery, Annapolis Royal, NS
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
The Sculpture Forum, La Have, NS
Kilkis Prefecture, Kilkis, Greece

Private Collections including:

Mr. Kenneth LeDrew, Corner Brook, NL
Mr. Anthony Kawaja, Corner Brook, NL
Mr. John Greer, East Dover, NS
Mr. Terence Mitchell, Terence Bay, NS
Dr. Maureen Gibbons, St. John's, NL
Dr. Katia Iankova, London, England
Sevgi Urum, Istanbul, Turkey
Sidney Unobskey, San Francisco, USA

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Western Star, *Gerard J. Kelly, Sculptor*, December, 2002
Conversations with the Goddess, Michael Wickerson, catalogue, 2000
The Humber Log, *Artifactual Artifices*, March, 2000
The Southern Gazette, *Marystown Artist*, April, 2000
The Western Star, *Sculptors ply their...*, August, 2000
The Beauty of Objects, Charlotte Jones, catalogue, 1999
The Communicator, Vol. 13, NOS. 4-5, Sept/Oct 1999
The Newfoundland Herald, *In the Temple of the Goddess*, May, 1999

SELECTED ARTICLES PUBLISHED

The Newfoundland Herald, *Popescu, the collective unconscious*, January 30, 1999
The Newfoundland Herald, *Traveling down, Pathways*, August 22, 1998
The Newfoundland Herald, *The State of the Arts*, August 15, 1998
The Newfoundland Herald, *Carving his own Niche*, December 12, 1998
The Newfoundland Herald, *Jean-Claude Roy, Panoramic view*, September 26, 1998

File name: Kelly01

Title: Torn Asunder

Date: 2011

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 70X70X60 cm

File name: Kelly02

Title: Disrobed

Date: 2011

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 80X25X20 cm

File name: Kelly03

Title: To as One

Date: 2011

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 90X25X25 cm

File name: Kelly04

Title: An Uneasy Reconciliation

Date: 2012

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 55X20X20 cm

File name: Kelly05

Title: Unholy Relationship

Date: 2012

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 60X30X30 cm

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DVD Image List

File name: Kelly06

Title: The Argument

Date: 2012

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 25X25X35 cm

File name: Kelly07

Title: La Petite Mort

Date: 2011

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 70X70X25 cm

File name: Kelly08

Title: Beautiful Lady On Top

Date: 2011

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 200X40X40 cm

File name: Kelly09

Title: Enveloped Within Her Folds

Date: 2011

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 190X80X55 cm

File name: Kelly10

Title: The Virgin's Dance

Date: 2011

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 120X35X22 cm

File name: Kelly11

Title: Shiva and Parvati

Date: 2012

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 230X80X80 cm

File name: Kelly12

Title: Sacred Union

Date: 2012

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 90X30X25 cm

File name: Kelly13

Title: Menage a Trois

Date: 2012

Materials: Steel

Dimensions: 164X80X55 cm



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